**Metaphors and Similes**

Rather than relying solely on colors, odors, textures, flavors and tones most writers convey image by comparing the images described with others already familiar to the reader. In this way, the writer is able to connect to the readers lived experience of other objects rather than having to rely on abstractions such as "red" or "sour." The two most widely recognized categories of such comparisons are similes and metaphors. 1

**Similes**

A simile, as most of you probably remember from high school English class, is a comparison using "like" or "as." for ***example:***

* When the pickup hit it, the armadillo came apart like a watermelon flung across the asphalt.
* His headache was as painful as a root canal without the benefit of laughing gas.
* My love is like a red, red rose. - Robert Burns
* Her hair was like gravy, running brown off her head and clumping up on her shoulders.
* The day we passed together for a while seemed a bright fire on a winter's night - Maurice Sceve
* You are like a hurricane: there's calm in your eye, but I'm getting blown away - Neil Young
* The air-lifted rhinoceros hit the ground like a garbage bag filled with split pea soup. 2

Similes can be very effective, especially when they juxtapose two dissimilar things the reader has never previously associated.

**Metaphors**

A metaphor is a comparison that speaks of one thing as if it were another:

The Oldsmobile was a boat, and Jason was the captain. The searchlights on the bow shone through the heaviest weather. The hold in the back could carry the largest of cargoes. The stateroom was the most comfortable on the high seas, with wide bench seats and a deluxe stereo system. "All ahead full," Jason commanded, and shifted into drive.

One danger with both metaphors and similes, with which the above example flirts, is using a simile or metaphor that does not surprise the reader, such as "The big car was a boat." 1

***Other examples of metaphors:***

* You are my sun.
* That throws some light on the question.
* The couch is the autobahn of the living room.
* Six Flags is the aquarium of roller coasters.
* This is a crisis. A large crisis. In fact, if you've got a moment, it's a twelve-story crisis with a magnificent entrance hall, carpeting throughout, 24-hour porterage and an enormous sign on the roof saying "This Is a Large Crisis."
* "All the world's a stage / and all the men and women merely players: / They have their exits and their entrances; / And one man in his time plays many parts, / His acts being seven ages." 3